REMARKS

Claims 1-8 are pending in the application.

35 U.S.C. § 103:

Claims 1-3 and 5

Claims 1-3 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brinkly (U.S. Patent 6,397,488) in view of Teraoka et al. (U.S. Patent 6,652,084 [hereinafter "Teraoka"]).

An exemplary aspect of the present invention is to position a collecting means in an area which effectively collects air containing solvent. At least one difference between the alleged collecting means 98 of Brinkly and a collecting means disclosed in the present specification, is that at least a portion of the fixing means is disposed inside a part of the collecting means. For example, as shown in the exemplary, non-limiting embodiment of Fig. 1, a portion of element 26a, for example, is disposed in an inner area defined by the hood 40.

To expedite prosecution, Applicant amends claim 1 to further define the collecting means. Brinkly fails to teach or suggest at least this feature. No portion of the applied fixing means 60, 62, 64 and 66 of Brinkly is positioned inside of the enclosure 80. Even when the enclosure 80 is lowered to a position above the heating elements, as shown in Fig. 2, it does not define an area in which the heating elements are disposed. Instead, the heating elements of Brinkly are disposed outside of the enclosure 80.

Accordingly, the combination of Brinkly and Teraoka fails to teach or suggest each feature of claim 1, such that the rejection thereof under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) should be withdrawn.

The rejection of dependent claims 2, 3 and 5 should also be withdrawn at least by virtue of these claims respectively depending upon claim 1.

Claim 4

Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brinkly, Teraoka, and further in view of Wotton et al. (U.S. Patent 6,390,618 [hereinafter "Wotton"]).

The Examiner acknowledges that the combination of Brinkly and Teraoka fails to teach or suggest a blowing means. The Examiner, therefore, relies on the fan 301 of Wotton, shown in Fig. 4. As an initial matter, Applicant respectfully submits that there is no motivation to combine the alleged blowing means of Wotton with that of Brinkly. The enclosure 80 of Brinkly is used to form a "sealed environment," as noted in col. 5, lines 24-26. On the other hand, the relied upon fan 301 of Wotton is disposed in an ambient area and is not confined. Therefore, one skilled in the art would not combine the fan 301 of Wotton with Brinkly because it would not provide any benefit. Instead, the enclosure of Brinkly would block any air provided by the fan, so as to render its air flow useless. Further, there is no motivation to put the fan 301 of Wotton inside the enclosure 80 of Brinkly because air flow is already generated in the enclosure 80.

Applicant also points out that any combination that takes in air from outside the enclosure 80 of Brinkly to the inside of the enclosure 80, by using the blowing means of Wotton, *teaches away* from the disclosure of Brinkly. This is because the inside pressure of the enclosure 80 of Brinkly should be reduced in comparison to its surrounding (see col. 5, lines 27-33; col. 6, lines 12-15; and step 126 in Figure 3).

Therefore, claim 4 is patentable over the applied references at least by virtue of its dependency upon claim 1, in addition to the lack of motivation to combine the teachings of Brinkly and Wotton.

Claims 6-8

Claims 6-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brinkly, in view of Teraoka and further in view of Lin (U.S. Patent 5,764,263).

The Examiner acknowledges that Brinkly and Teraoka fail to teach or suggest preheating means provided between the image forming means and the fixing means. The Examiner relies on Lin for allegedly teaching this feature. Without conceding to the Examiner's combination, Applicant submits that claims 6-8 are patentable over the applied references at least by virtue of their respective dependencies upon claim 1.

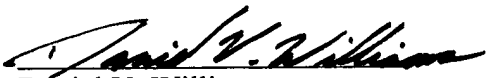
NEW CLAIMS:

Applicant adds new claims 9-22 to further define the invention. Claims 12-22 correspond to claims 1-11, while not using "means" language. Claims 12-22 are patentable over the art for reasons similar to those supporting claims 1-11.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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